

Sir Ernest Satow’s Acculturation to *Bakumatsu* Japan as Related in *A Diplomat in Japan*

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Introduction

Sir Ernest Satow (1843~1929) was a British diplomat who spent a large part of his career working in Japan. His first posting to Japan (September 1862~February 1869) ended up lasting six-and-a-half years and coincided with the events which resulted in the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Satow kept a diary throughout these years which he called his ‘journal’, and at the end of his career he wrote a memoir of his first years in Japan which was published in 1921 as *A Diplomat in Japan* (henceforth, *Diplomat*). In addition to charting the history of *bakumatsu* Japan from a British perspective *Diplomat* also describes Satow’s impressions of Japan, his dealings with Japanese people, and his encounters with Japanese culture. This study is a search for evidence within *Diplomat* which could indicate the progression of Satow’s acculturation to *bakumatsu* Japan and will compare his experiences against four stages in the process of acculturation.

1. Stages of Acculturation

It is generally recognized that people who go to live in a new culture often experience some difficulty in adjusting themselves to the values, customs, traditions, and behaviour, of the people in the unfamiliar culture. Oberg (1954) applied the expression ‘culture shock’ to the emotions of stress and unease which are experienced by people entering a new culture. Another element of the culture shock phenomenon described by Oberg, in

addition to the challenges posed by an unfamiliar culture, is the simultaneous experience of being separated from the person’s home culture and experiencing feelings of confusion related to lack of cultural familiarity. Winkelman (1994) also explored the double-sided aspect of culture shock; culture shock is not solely related to having a reaction to the new cultural environment but is also a feeling of longing for the familiar culture which has been left behind.

Since Oberg first proposed a four-stage model for the process of acculturation, subsequent researchers have made their own adaptations to his model using their own terminology (see Table 1). Whereas Oberg chose to describe the progression using medical expressions, other researchers including Smalley (1963), Richardson (1974), and Kealey (1978), opted to call the different stages in their models by using vocabulary which would be descriptive of the emotions being experienced by the person in question.

Although different names for the stages are used, it can be seen that the stages of the acculturation process described are broadly similar. An initial period of excitement, and of positive feelings towards the new culture, gives way to a stage in which those feelings are overcome by negative emotions and in which confusion and alienation are dominant. Some people may never pass beyond the second stage, and indeed, anyone who is forced unwillingly to live in a different culture may not experience the first stage at all. In such cases, the

Oberg (1954)	Smalley (1963)	Richardson (1974)	Kealey (1978)
1. Incubation	1. Fascination	1. Elation	1. Exploration
2. Crisis	2. Hostility	2. Depression	2. Frustration
3. Recovery	3. Adjustment	3. Recovery	3. Coping
4. Full recovery	4. Biculturalism	4. Acculturation	4. Adjustment

Table 1: Models for the four stages of acculturation (Source: Neuliep, 2015)

result can be an individual existing in a different culture while never adjusting to it, and perhaps only interacting with other people from their own home culture who find themselves in the same situation. In cases where an individual overcomes the negative emotions of the second stage, they may proceed through stages three and four, provided they are motivated to do so and given sufficient time.

In addition to the labels shown in table 1 for the four stages of acculturation, the first stage is also commonly referred to as the 'tourist phase' or the 'honeymoon period', both of which expressions convey the feelings of wonder and amazement which many people enjoy when they first arrive in a new culture. During this honeymoon period the traveller may also encounter problems and feelings of unease, but any such feelings are likely to be overlooked amidst a general feeling of excitement relating to the freshness of everything that the traveller is seeing. In cases where the period of stay in the new culture is extended beyond a few weeks, or even a few months, the first stage is likely to change to a period of realization that adjustment to the new culture is required. This can be precipitated by a particular event or simply by the attractiveness experienced in the initial phase wearing off.

In this study, in which the four stages of acculturation are applied to the writings of Ernest Satow in *Diplomat*, the four stages were termed 1) honeymoon period, 2) culture shock, 3) adjustment, and 4) acculturation. The following chapters will assess the evidence recorded in *Diplomat* with the intention of tracking Satow's progression through the four stages.

2. Satow's Progress Through the Four Stages of Acculturation

2.1 Honeymoon Period

Satow opens *Diplomat* by describing the process by which he applied for the position of student interpreter at the British Legation in Japan. In the very first paragraph of the first chapter of *Diplomat* Satow states his motivation for visiting Japan as having sprung from reading Oliphant's account of Lord Elgin's visit to Japan in 1859. Satow's impression gained from that book was that Japan was 'a realised fairyland', where 'the sky was always blue' and 'where the sun shone perpetually'. It would be natural enough for such an idealised vision to be shattered when it collided with reality, but in *Diplomat*

Satow never expresses any feelings of disillusionment in this regard. It could be that Satow's preconceptions about Japan and the interest in, and love for, the country which they supported were sufficiently powerful to override any negative feelings he experienced. Indeed, when he first arrived by boat at the bay of Edo he comments that 'no scenery in the world could surpass it'. Starting off with such overwhelmingly positive emotions towards Japan it is perhaps not surprising that he was powerfully motivated to overcome any difficulties he might face.

This is not to say that Satow was unaware or naïve about potential dangers as an outsider. He describes at some length the attacks which were made on the British Legation in the weeks immediately preceding his arrival, and notes that he had purchased a revolver for self-protection before he left England. Despite this foreknowledge of the risks of living as a Westerner in *bakumatsu* Japan, and having taken precautions for his personal safety, the infamous murder of Richardson on the *Tokkaido* at Namamugi only one week after Satow's arrival in September 1862 could have been the type of incident to trigger the stage of culture shock in many people. Instead, Satow seems to have treated this notorious incident with considerable sang-froid. He states that when he heard it for the first time, the news 'did not shock me in the least', and he argues that the reports of other incidents which he had received while still in England had prepared him to 'look on the murder of a foreigner as an ordinary, every-day affair', while admitting that he was somewhat ashamed of his lack of sympathy for the victims. He also records that if he had felt differently, the 'sudden introduction to the danger of a horrid death might have rendered me quite unfit for the career I had adopted'.

Satow therefore, clearly believed that his phlegmatic nature was a strength in his favour and that he was unlikely to be overwhelmed by exposure to danger in his new way of life. Since the murder of Richardson took place at a time which would definitely have fallen within Satow's honeymoon period for acculturation, it could be argued that because everything about life in Japan was new and exciting, the Richardson affair served only as an appetizer for the promise of future adventures. Satow's sang-froid could also be attributed to the bravado of youth. He does however state that he always felt that 'my life was in peril', when passing one of the *daimyo's*

processions along the *Tokkaido*, and he could easily have changed his mind about Japan and the Japanese if unrestrained violence against Westerners had indeed become an 'ordinary, every-day affair'.

A supplementary anecdote from Satow's earliest days in Japan is further evidence of his insouciance towards the potential dangers of living there. He notes that his first experience of an earthquake occurred on November 2, 1862, just under two months he had arrived. He goes on to state his regret that his exciting experiences in Japan 'never included a really serious earthquake'. He does however acknowledge that he and other Westerners came to give the destructive power of earthquakes greater respect the longer the time they resided in Japan.

In summary, the evidence of *Diplomat* suggests that Satow arrived in Japan with a romanticized impression of the country which set him up for a honeymoon period in which even the dangers in his new life became something positive for him. In Satow's case, this honeymoon period seems to have been particularly long and, based on the years 1862-1869 which are covered in *Diplomat*, could be said to have never really come to an end. Satow complains about his work from time to time, but only in that it interrupts his study of the Japanese language, and he never mentions feelings of alienation, hostility, or depression.

2.2 Absence of a Culture Shock Stage?

This being the case, are there any problems or complaints about his life as recorded in *Diplomat* which could be interpreted as evidence that Satow's honeymoon period had come to an end?

Satow does relate an early incident in which he refused to submit to racial segregation at the theatre. Having paid the correct price for sitting in the audience with other Japanese theatregoers, Satow refused to be moved to the back of the theatre. This kind of discrimination towards foreigners was probably common enough, and could have left Satow feeling aggrieved, however, by refusing to yield to the requests of the theatre manager and finally being allowed to remain where he himself had chosen to sit, Satow seems to feel that he won the argument. Therefore, even this experience became a positive one for him. By refusing to submit to discrimination Satow did not allow himself to be victim and his sense of moral rectitude which is evident in this case may also have been a factor in accounting for Satow

not experiencing a prolonged stage of culture shock.

He does however, complain about the cold in Japanese houses in a manner which could be said to be typical of someone who is going through the culture shock stage in their process of acculturation. He describes how Japanese rooms were heated with a charcoal brazier which provided inadequate heat for living in European style, which indicates that Satow was trying to live according to his own cultural sensibilities without adapting to the circumstances of Japanese heating and building design.

Diplomat records Satow's first posting in Japan in chronological order, and before the end of 1862 he does record one opinion which could be a symptom of the culture shock stage. Satow says that he was eagerly anticipating the opening of the newly-built legation in Edo because 'Yokohama was a hybrid sort of town, that by no means fulfilled my expectations'. This can be interpreted as an expression of Satow's disillusionment that he was not experiencing the 'real' Japan. Satow probably describes Yokohama as being a hybrid town because with its foreign settlement and concentration of Western traders, sailors, and drifters, it probably seemed to him to be neither authentically Japanese nor Western. Like many travellers after him, Satow was searching for authenticity, and was perhaps frustrated and unsatisfied with Yokohama's lack of exoticism. This interpretation is reinforced when much later, in 1867, Satow writes the following about his first visit to Osaka,

Everything was new and delightful in Ozaka, politics and diplomacy afforded unceasing interest and excitement, the streets, shops, theatres and temples were full of life and character of a kind thoroughly distinct from what we were accustomed to in Yedo and Yokohama, and the difference of dialect and costume imparted additional piquancy to the women. (p.201)

That Satow felt able to write in these terms in his fifth year of living in Japan suggests that he was still experiencing emotions akin to those of being in the honeymoon period, and also that life in Yokohama was unsatisfactory from a culturally enriching point of view.

Satow openly records his discomfort at watching a public execution in December 1864, but the incident does not seem to have precipitated a stage of culture shock. Satow acknowledged the necessity for carrying out the death sentence and does not seem to have had a problem

with witnessing death; rather, it was the gory nature of a public beheading which he found difficult to witness. On the evidence of *Diplomat*, Satow does not seem to have dwelt too much on this potentially traumatic event.

2.3 Adjustment Phase

Although Satow seems to have had a long honeymoon period, and although *Diplomat* records very few emotions which could, with hindsight, truly be ascribed to a culture shock stage, in terms of adjustment to Japanese living conditions it appears that it took Satow some considerable time to change from his European ways. During his visit to Kagoshima in early 1867 he mentions that he declined an invitation to sleep in a Japanese house because he preferred a European bed and he comments that, 'at that time I was not so accustomed to Japanese ways as I afterwards became'. Satow had now been living in Japan for over four years, so his comment indicates that although he had been living in Japan, he had probably maintained a European style lifestyle as far as possible throughout that time.

Immediately following on from that visit to Kagoshima, Satow's next port of call was Uwajima, and in his account of his experiences there he once again makes a comment which is somewhat remarkable coming from someone who had already been living in Japan for almost four-and-a-half years. After having been impressed by the 'utmost civility' of the crowd of Japanese who followed him round while he was exploring, Satow records that, 'I felt my heart warm more and more to the Japanese'. This comment should not be misinterpreted as indicating that Satow had been hostile towards Japanese people up to this point. Throughout *Diplomat*, Satow clearly enjoys the company of the Japanese people whom he meets. He makes the occasional derogatory comment after having been treated badly by petty officials, and is naturally upset when discriminated against. However, he does not seem to bear grudges against the Japanese people in general; he regularly describes acquaintances made through his official duties as 'friends', and records his respect for his teachers and liking for other people.

When Satow was prompted to write, 'I felt my heart warm more and more to the Japanese', it was probably an indication that he was truly entering the adjustment stage of his acculturation to Japan. It indicates that he has an empathy towards the Japanese people as a whole which he maybe had not acknowledged to himself before.

However, his length of time living in the country has by now shown him that the majority of Japanese people are good and decent, and that he is capable of liking them in the same way that he would people of his own country.

In fact, it seems that Satow's tour of Western Japan at the start of 1867, during which he visited Kagoshima, Uwajima, and then Hyogo, could be said to represent a kind of epiphany for Satow in which he crossed a boundary and started stage three of his process of acculturation in earnest. While still at Uwajima, Satow was invited to dine with a man named Ireye, the captain of the Uwajima battery. After partaking of a dinner which lasted from six to eleven, and after having drunk sake with his hosts, Satow notes that at half-past eleven, 'we went to bed in Japanese fashion'. Having arrived in Japan in 1862 and having travelled to other parts of the country (although having been accommodated on a warship on most of those visits), it might be thought unlikely that Satow would not have experienced sleeping in a futon up to that point. Nevertheless, after the dinner with Ireye he writes, 'I was surprised to find that one could sleep comfortably without sheets'. Satow's remark either suggests that this was his first experience of sleeping in Japanese style, or possibly, according to a different interpretation, that this was the first time that he had found sleeping in a futon agreeable. Whichever interpretation is placed on Satow's words, it suggests that his night spent ashore at Uwajima was a revelation to him that he might have encountered several years ago if he had been more culturally adventurous.

It is also revealing that on 12th January 1867, only five days after his first experience of sleeping comfortably in a futon, Satow finds himself being taken to have a Japanese bath in Hyogo. He records that, 'Here for the first time I learnt how to put on a cotton gown (*yukata*) after the bath, and enjoy the sensation of gradually cooling down'. This seems to represent a further shedding of cultural inhibitions by Satow, and a greater willingness to experiment with Japanese ways of doing things. These experiences were perhaps the beginning of his subsequent decision to live in Japanese style and eat a Japanese diet. They also show that Satow was, by now, thoroughly immersed in the adjustment stage of acculturation.

2.4 Acculturation Phase

It is after this point that Satow seems to have moved

from an adjustment stage in which he experienced Japanese ways of doing things when circumstances allowed, to an acculturation phase in which he willingly introduced Japanese practices into his own life. In the spring of 1867, Satow started sharing lodgings with Mitford in the small monastery of Monryo-in in the vicinity of Sengaku-ji in Edo. Satow comments that, 'we spent several months together living entirely on Japanese food, which was brought three times a day from a restaurant known as *Mansei*'. Unlike later writers such as Chamberlain (1890), Satow makes no complaint about living on Japanese food which suggests that to do so was a matter of choice for himself and Mitford. The two young Englishmen had obviously reached a point where they were ready to forego Western-style cooking and rely on Japanese food to satisfy them. This dedication to a diet of Japanese food is further referenced when in May 1867, Satow and his companion Wirgman chose to travel overland from Osaka to Edo. Satow reports that, 'Wirgman and I were by this time so accustomed to living on Japanese food that we resolved not to burden ourselves with stores of any kind, knives or forks, finger glasses or table napkins'.

Further evidence of Satow's acculturation arrives two months later, when, at the end of July 1867, he was ordered to accompany Sir Harry Parkes on a journey to Niigata. Satow claims that he and Mitford were so orientalised by this time that they were appalled by the behaviour of their chief when he climbed onto the roof of a building to get a better view of the town. Satow writes that he, 'longed to see our chief conduct himself with the impassive dignity of a Japanese gentleman'. This is significant evidence of Satow's cultural awareness at this time. Satow knows how Japanese people would expect a superior to behave and feels ashamed when his chief does not adjust his own behaviour accordingly.

Later, the British expedition crossed over to Sado Island in order to inspect a gold mine. A *kago* had been prepared for Sir Harry Parkes, as transport for him to use to cross the island from south to north. However, Satow reports that Sir Harry did not want to travel in a *kago*, nor to pass, 'the night on the floor of a Japanese house in native quilts, and with nothing better than rice and fish to eat'. Sir Harry's reluctance to accept Japanese-style accommodation provides a good contrast with Satow's more flexible attitude by this time. In fact, it was decided that Satow should travel by *kago*, while Sir

Harry made his way to the far side of the island on board HMS Basilisk.

By the autumn of 1867, Satow had stopped sharing lodgings with Mitford in the small house at Sengaku-ji, and was now living in a house called *Taka-yashiki*. It seems to have been located fairly close to his former residence because he mentions receiving his food from the same restaurant, *Mansei*. Once again, Satow clearly states that, 'my food was entirely in the Japanese style' although he adds, 'but I continued to drink English beer'. It would be interesting to learn why Satow shunned Japanese beer and whether his choice was a positive preference for English beer or a negative dislike of Japanese beer. The fact of the comment having been recorded at all suggests that it was a matter of importance to Satow. As he continues to describe his domestic arrangements at *Taka-yashiki*, Satow gives further evidence of his adaptation to Japanese living. He states,

Thus established as a householder after my own liking, able to devote myself to Japanese studies and to live intimately with Japanese and thus become acquainted with their thoughts and views, I was perfectly happy. (p. 282)

Satow is clearly completely satisfied with his way of life at this point and later, when writing about his circumstances in 1868, he re-emphasises his choice to live on a Japanese diet.

Bread and beef were unprocurable at Yedo, and I could not afford to set up a cuisine in European fashion, so while there I used to have my food brought in from a well-reputed Japanese restaurant close by, and came to like it quite as well as what I had been accustomed to all my life. (p. 367)

When the time came for Satow to return to England on leave at the start of 1869, he finishes *Diplomat* by describing his departure from Yokohama. He mentions the tears which came to his eyes when a band started playing 'Home, sweet home' and he records his regret at 'leaving a country where I had lived so happily for six years and a half'. Whether intentionally or not, Satow gives readers the lasting impression that Japan has become like a home to him, and in terms of this study, it can be said that for a foreigner to consider a different country their home, then a significant amount of acculturation has clearly taken place.

3. Discussion

Although it includes a large number of personal reflections, *Diplomat* is primarily a memoir detailing the political conditions in Japan which led to the Meiji Restoration of 1868. For that reason, although *Diplomat* is personal in that it records what Satow saw, heard, and experienced, the majority of the prose is used to explain the political background to the situations in which Satow found himself. On the other hand, the diaries (Satow called them his ‘journal’) on which Satow based *Diplomat* are even more personal in tone. Ruxton (2015) compared *Diplomat* to Satow’s journal for the same years. Ruxton concludes that the diaries are ‘franker’ and contain ‘the young Ernest Satow’s raw and unprocessed experiences’. Ruxton also says that it is in the journal ‘where we see most clearly how Satow grew up in the Far East’. Because *Diplomat* was a reflective account, based on the journal, but written over fifty years after the events themselves, it represents a mature selection of the journal’s contents, and naturally focuses on the political and macro-elements of the historical narrative. The author of this paper now plans to examine Satow’s journal for indications of the progress of his acculturation process, particularly with the goal of identifying whether or not Satow ever experienced a period which could correspond to a stage of culture shock.

If Satow did experience a stage of culture shock, maybe he considered it unsuitable material for *Diplomat*. Even so, based on the evidence of *Diplomat* a modern analysis of the factors which make an individual susceptible to culture shock would suggest that Satow was unlikely to suffer from culture shock to a significant degree. Lonner (1986) identified six factors (interpersonal factors, biological factors, intrapersonal factors, spatial factors, geopolitical factors, and control factors) that can have an influence on the degree to which an individual will be affected by culture shock.

An analysis of Satow’s circumstances compared against Lonner’s six factors would suggest that Satow was in a strong position to cope satisfactorily with any culture shock. In terms of interpersonal factors, Satow was young and open-minded; he had learned some Japanese in advance of his arrival, and studying the language was his *raison-d’être* for being in Japan. As for biological factors and intrapersonal factors, he seems to have been in good physical health and he enjoyed the support of friends, both Westerners and Japanese during his time in the country.

Lonner’s spatial factors would probably not have affected Satow to a significant degree because the climates of Japan and England are relatively similar, but considering the conditions in *bakumatsu* Japan, geopolitical factors could have caused Satow problems with acculturation. As mentioned earlier in this study, if attacks on Westerners had become more widespread and commonplace, Satow’s outlook on Japan and his progression through the stages of acculturation might have been very different.

The last of Lonner’s six factors to be considered is control factors. On the evidence of *Diplomat*, Satow seems to have felt in control of his interactions with Japan. Above all, he was motivated to go to Japan in the first place and it was his primary goal to master the Japanese language. Yang, Zhang, and Sheldon (2018) have reported that students who have self-determined motivation for studying abroad experience less culture shock and greater well-being while overseas. If Satow were a modern student studying abroad he would fit completely into that category of being less at risk of culture shock.

4. Conclusion

A Diplomat in Japan is Satow’s memoir of his first posting to Japan, and whilst told from his point of view, does not dwell too much upon his emotions as he adjusted himself to his new life in a new country. However, there are enough hints at his state of mind to suggest that he enjoyed a long, never-ending in some respects, honeymoon period, and that he does not seem to have experienced a crisis or culture shock phase to any significant degree. Although many Westerners living in the foreign settlement at Yokohama were content to keep company only with other Westerners like themselves, *Diplomat* records how Satow went in search of Japanese cultural experiences and how he cultivated the friendship of Japanese people. On account of this attitude, Satow became adjusted to and finally acculturated to a life of living in Japan.

A particularly appropriate example of Satow’s journey from newcomer to acculturation can be found in *Diplomat* when he describes his feelings towards the cultural practice of teeth blackening and the white make-up on the faces of geisha. In early 1867, during his first visit to Osaka, Satow recalls how he thought at the time that these practices ‘ruined’ the looks of the young

women. However, he continues to recall that, 'In later times I became more accustomed to the shining black teeth' of married women and artistes, and that when the practice was discontinued following the lead of the empress, 'it was long before I, in common with most Japanese, could reconcile myself to the new style'. This anecdote provides a microcosm of Satow's process of acculturation to Japan.

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概要

「一外交官の見た明治維新」で語るアーネスト・サトウのアカルチュレーションプロセス

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アーネスト・サトウ（1843～1929）はイギリスの外交官で、第一次日本駐在（1862～1869）は幕末期から明治維新に重なっていた。その数年後サトウが記したものが「一外交官の見た明治維新」という回想録である。本論文では、「一外交官の見た明治維新」を分析することで、アーネスト・サトウの日本滞在におけるアカルチュレーションプロセス（異文化にさらされた人間が、新しい文化や環境に適応するまでにたどるとされている4つのプロセス）を調べる。

キーワード：アカルチュレーション、幕末日本、アーネスト・サトウ、カルチャーショック